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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Time Data Shows Double-Digit Drops in the South West Area

TORONTO – New data shows the Ontario government's Wait Time Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for key health services in the South West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Trends in the South West LHIN area are remarkable with significant decreases in wait times for a number of key health services," Smitherman said. "Through the leadership and hard work of thousands of front line health professionals, the Wait Time Strategy is clearly achieving real results for patients by improving access to care, closer to home."

As a result of the government's Wait Time Strategy, wait times in which 90 per cent of cases are completed in the South West LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 59.3 per cent for cataract surgery (208 days)
- 41.0 per cent for hip replacement (177 days)
- 36.6 per cent for knee replacement (176 days)
- 29.4 per cent for angiography (14 days)
- 24.2 per cent for angioplasty (10 days)
- 12.6 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (seven days).

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged one health service area that remains a challenge – there has been a 10.3 per cent increase in wait times in MRI scans since August/September 2005.

"We continue to make significant investments in MRI scans and we expect to see improvements in wait times for this area," Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Time Strategy, the Ontario government has invested $65,386,211 for additional procedures in hospitals in the South West LHIN area, including:

- 7,466 cataract surgeries ($5,513,450)
- 11,329 cardiac procedures ($17,291,150)
- 2,812 hip and knee joint replacements ($22,791,534)
- 1,826 cancer surgeries ($11,440,877)
- 23,931 hours, 35,897 exams MRI ($7,636,900)
- 2,847 hours, 9,965 exams CT ($712,300).

The new wait time data is available at www.ontariowaittimes.com, which is closing in on nearly 4 million hits as of today.

"This is a very significant achievement in improved access to care for patients and communities served by the South West LHIN," said Tony Woolgar, chief executive officer of the South West LHIN. "It reflects the commitment and hard work of health care organizations and health care professionals who have worked closely together to achieve these results. We will continue to work with our health service providers to build on this improvement as part of the implementation of our Integrated Health Service Plan."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait time and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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